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REMARKS*Preliminary Claim Amendments*

Applicants respectfully request entry of the above preliminary claim amendments, which cancel Claims 19-21, 23 and 25-43, amend Claims 1-3 and 5, and add new Claims 48-67.

Support for the amendments and new claims can be found at Page 2, line 11 through Page 4, line 19; Page 18, line 23 through Page 20, line 7; and Claims 2-6 and 8-17 of the PCT Application as published, among other places.

Suggested Requirement for Restriction

Applicants respectfully suggest a requirement for restriction, as below. This suggested requirement for restriction is being filed prior to the earliest of a first Office Action on the merits or a restriction requirement made by the Examiner.

The application contains claims to two or more independent and distinct inventions, as follows: Group I: Claims 1-17, 18, 22, 24 and 63-67; and Group II: Claims 44-62.

These inventions are independent and distinct because the purge gas supply systems and humidification methods of independent Claims 1, 7, 18 and 24 are unconnected in design, operation and effect to the lithographic projection apparatus, and methods of providing a purge gas to at least a part of a lithographic projection apparatus, of independent Claims 44-47. Specifically, Claims 44-47 involve elements of a lithographic projection apparatus, including an illuminator, support structure, substrate table, and projection beam (or the use of such elements). Claims 44-47 therefore have a different design, operation and effect than a purge gas supply system or humidification method as in independent Claims 1, 7, 18 and 24 because Claims 44-47 involve components specific to the use of radiation of lithography. Further, each of independent Claims 44-47 in Group II is patentable over the claims of Group I, because it would not have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art, based on the purge gas supply systems and humidification methods of independent Claims 1, 7, 18 and 24 to use such systems in the lithographic projection apparatus and methods of independent Claims 44-47, since moisture was not present in purge gas in conventional lithographic methods. Similar reasoning applies to the dependent claims of Groups I and II, which include the elements of their respective base claims.

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In addition, there would be a burden on the Examiner if the restriction were not required, because the claims of Groups I and II have a separate status in the art. For example, the purge gas supply systems of independent Claims 1, 7, 18 and 24 are the subject of inventive efforts in fields such as those of U.S. Patents No.'s 6,149,817 and 6,309,550, which are classified in U.S. Classes such as 210; whereas the lithographic projection apparatus and methods of independent Claims 44-47 are the subject of inventive efforts in fields such as those of U.S. Patents No.'s 5,296,891 and 5,523,193, which are classified in U.S. Classes such as 346.

Election without Traverse

Based on the foregoing suggested requirement for restriction, Applicants hereby elect without traverse the invention of Group I, i.e., Claims 1-17, 18, 22, 24 and 63-67, which has no more than 5 independent claims and no more than 25 total claims.

Supplemental Information Disclosure Statement

A Supplemental Information Disclosure Statement is expected to be filed shortly, separately from this Amendment.

CONCLUSION

It is believed that all claims are in condition for allowance, and it is respectfully requested that the application be passed to issue. If the Examiner feels that a telephone conference would expedite prosecution of this case, the Examiner is invited to call the undersigned.

Respectfully submitted,

HAMILTON, BROOK, SMITH & REYNOLDS, P.C.

By 

Keith J. Wood

Registration No. 45,235

Telephone: (978) 341-0036

Facsimile: (978) 341-0136

Concord, MA 01742-9133

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